

Pinot Noir Press



KUKERI WINES

An award-winning Bulgarian winemaker crafts small lots of Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir from some of the most unique vineyards in Napa Valley and Sonoma County.



It is doubtful that anyone in the California wine industry has a more colorful background than the owner of Kukeri Wines, one Peter Kirilov.

Peter Kirilov is Bulgarian by birth and holds a master's degree in winemaking from Bulgaria's premier vinification school, the University of Food Technologies located in the City of Plovdiv. After graduating in 2003, California beckoned to Kirilov and the young entrepreneur jumped at the chance to land in the hallowed grounds of Napa Valley. He first secured an internship with the venerable Truchard Vineyards that lasted the next two years. Then, another opportunity allowed him the chance to join the high-tech wine company, Vinovation, Inc. in Sebastopol, Sonoma County. This job involved a number of research and development projects and was followed by winemaker positions at Meadowcroft Wines (Sonoma) and Foyt Family Wines (Napa and Sonoma).

Fast forwarding to 2013, Peter Kirilov decided to venture on his own and the first Kukeri Wines officially saw the light of day.

"I had grown up in a small Bulgarian town and my family had always made wine like many other families in the area," Kirilov recalled. "There was no modern equipment and

some of the vintages were better than others. I learned how to make wine at a very early age and have always considered wine to be in my blood."

It was Kirilov's success at other wineries, especially Meadowcroft, that prompted him to think about his own wine label. He wanted to do something to honor his native country and tell people about Bulgaria's history and culture, which is why he named the winery 'Kukeri,' which refers to a traditional Bulgarian pagan ritual that originated more than 8,000 years ago. The ritual centered around the God Dionysus who was always associated with wine, fertility and rebirth. It was performed by men who danced around to scare away evil spirits, as well as to provide a good harvest, health, fertility and happiness.

During the ritual, colorful costumes cover most of the body and include decorated masks of animals and large bells that are attached to the mens' belts. The masks are scary in nature and imply a protection from the harmful influence of impure powers. The dance moves in special rhythmic steps and the dancers fill the air with sounds of bells and whispered blessings for prosperity. All of the activity is done at night so as to negate the sun's presence during the day.

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Kirilov started his venture in 2010 with some Cabernet Sauvignon from Mt. Veeder, and finally released his first wines in 2013. He had access to some marvelous fruit in this appellation, which he believes produces the finest Cabernet Sauvignon in Napa Valley. Kirilov also crafts a limited release Pinot Noir from Sonoma County, specifically from the famed Los Carneros region where some of California's best Pinot Noirs originate.

This year, Kukeri Wines will produce around 500 cases of Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir. The company's long-term goal is somewhere around 1,000 cases, a level Kirilov feels is in keeping with his idea of quality.

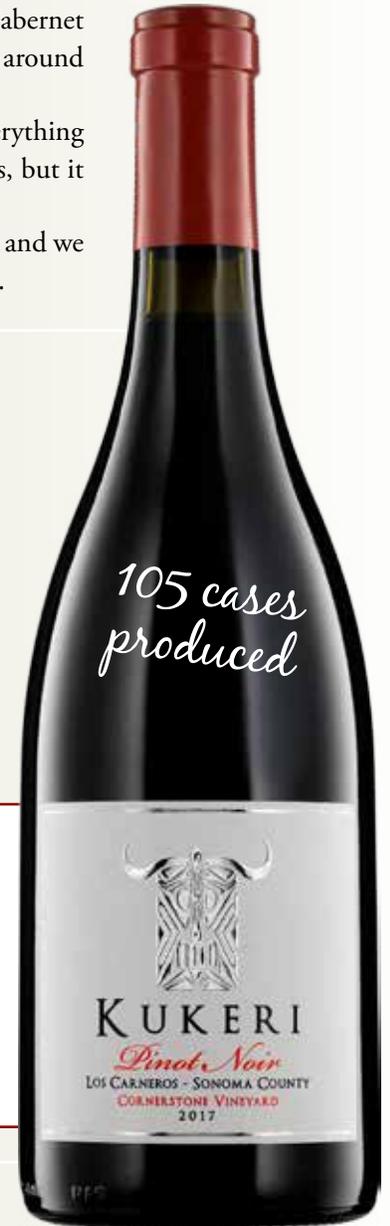
"If I remain small, I can control everything. Quality means everything to me and I am happy being a boutique winery. There is some opportunity to grow Kukeri Wines, but it will be gradual when it occurs."

Peter Kirilov is one of a handful of Bulgarians that are involved in the California wine industry and we salute him on his outstanding accomplishments and the unbridled success of his impressive wines.

KUKERI 2017 PINOT NOIR Cornerstone Vineyard, Los Carneros, Sonoma County

Kukeri's 2017 Pinot Noir comes from the Cornerstone Vineyard located within the cool-climate Los Carneros appellation of Sonoma County. A dense and elegant wine, this Pinot Noir offers vivid fruit and floral aromatics. Silky in texture and complex in flavor, the Kukeri 2017 Pinot Noir has notes of dark fruit, boysenberry, plum compote, and strawberry, which fuses perfectly with the exotic undertones of anise and vanilla oak. Soft and smooth tannins create a luxurious mouthfeel from start to finish, while bright acidity gives excellent balance. Aged 14 months in oak. 100% Pinot Noir. Enjoy!

91 POINTS
— James Suckling



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